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October 7, 1952

MEMORANDUM OF CONVERSATION

Present: Admiral Kirk
George A. Morgan - PSB

Richard Bissell
Thomas Wilson
Sam Berger - ODMS

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Date 21 JUNE '82 Reviewer 103430

Subject: Alleged Change in the Communist Line

The gentlemen from ODMS called to ask the Director's views on questions raised in the attached memorandum from Mr. Wilson to Admiral Kirk, October 7. In addition, they brought out the following points orally:

The question of whether a change in the Soviet-Communist line is taking place concerns both the global picture and the tactics in certain key countries such as Italy, France, India, and Japan. The global picture is relevant to basic long-term allocations of resources. The local picture in Italy and France is particularly important for the shorter-range problem of countering the Communists during the next few months; for example, in connection with the Italian elections. Even if the line does not shift as radically as it did in 1935 when the popular fronts were formed, it may take an important step in the same direction. Also, whatever our own diagnosis, it is virtually certain that recent indications such as the treatment of Marty and Tillon in France and certain passages in Stalin's article will give rise to wishful speculation both in this country and abroad which will pose important psychological problems for us.

Admiral Kirk and George Morgan stressed the importance of not being in a hurry to reach conclusions about the Communist line and said they expected further important indications within

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the next few weeks. Meanwhile, they were somewhat skeptical as to whether current changes go very deep. They pointed to such considerations as Russian arrogance with regard to military prowess and the formation of an East German army.

Mr. Bissell and his colleagues said they would like to come back for further discussion of these problems in two or three weeks.

Attachment:

Memo to Admiral Kirk fr
Thomas Wilson, MSA, 10/7/52

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MEMORANDUM TO: Admiral Kirk
Director, Psychological Strategy Board

From: Thomas Wilson

1. During the past year there have been several indications of a shift in Communist tactics in certain countries:

a) In India, the Communists in recent months seem to have abandoned, at least in part, the former policy of stimulating insurrections, riots, land seizure, etc., and to have moved to a policy of using parliamentary and legal means to achieve their ends. There are also signs that the Communists seem to be shifting to a "democratic front" policy.

b) In Italy, the Communists fought the 1951 local elections on the basis of traditional Soviet and Communist symbols and slogans, and emphasized the differences between Communists and non-Communists. In contrast, the 1952 elections were fought on the basis of nationalist symbols and slogans; and a great effort was made to induce non-Communist groups to enter into "a united front". In recent months, more and more emphasis is being placed not on the differences between Communists and non-Communists, but on the areas of agreement between Communists and other "democrats." According to information which reached us last year, Cuccchi and Magnani told Sileno, after they seceded from the Communist Party in the spring of 1951, that Moscow had issued instructions to disband the Italian para-military organization.

c) In France, evidence is accumulating that there has been a fight inside the Communist Party for some time. The fight, according to one interpretation is between Marty, Tillon and those who favor forceful means, retaining and strengthening the para-military organizations, and following a policy of no compromise, and those who believe that the post-war revolutionary sentiment has subsided and to continue to pursue such a policy would be suicidal. According to the latter the Communist

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Party has now virtually isolated itself from the people and is rapidly losing its influence over the working class. The expulsion of Marty and Tillion is interpreted in some circles as evidence that the French Communists have decided to concentrate on legal methods and to revive "the popular front idea." Recent statements in the French Communist press and intensified overtures to the Christian trade unions, to the Force Ouvriere and to "other democratic" elements seem to bear this out.

2. The London "Economist" in its issue of September 27th and Lowenthal in the September 21st issue of the London "Observer" both speculate on whether a change in Soviet tactics is taking place. Both lean to the view that shift is now in process, because Stalin has become alarmed about the rearmament of the West, and because he now feels that the period of easy annexation is over. The new line, the "Economist" and "Observer" articles suggest, seems to be "peaceful coexistence" in order to give the Soviets and Chinese Communists time to consolidate their gains.

3. If a shift in Soviet tactics is actually taking place, it has most important implications for our policy and our psychological approach. The fear of war is so great in many countries and the attitude of neutrality in some countries so wide spread that such a shift, if it is taking place, is bound to be welcomed by many people, to create differences in the Western camp, to stimulate those who favor the development of East-West trade, to create greater and greater unwillingness to make sacrifices on behalf of rearmament, etc., etc.

4. All this suggests that we urgently need an analysis of Communist strategy and tactics in order to determine what changes, if any, are taking place and what significance is to be attached to them. Such an analysis will probably need to wait until after the Communist Congress in Moscow, which should shed some light on this problem, but it would save time if we began at once to examine the situation in a number of key countries.

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